

Office of New Americans Advisory Board Meeting
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, July 7, 2021
1:00pm-5:00PM

DRAFT FOR REVIEW

Office of New Americans Advisory Board (ONAAB) members present:

Hassan Ahmad, Kate Ayers, Hannah Borja, Amelia Castaneda, Jennifer Crewalk, Dr. Fern Hauck, Michael Hoefer, Susannah Lepley, Eric Lin, Djibril Niang, Ahoo Salem, Eva Stitt, Milton Vickerman, Soyoung Yoon, Juan Santacoloma, Rammy Barbari (electronic participation)

ONAAB members absent: *Dora Muhammad*

ONAAB Ex-officio members present:

*Paul Berry, Virginia Latino Advisory Board
Mona Siddiqui, Governor's Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*

Additional ONA and Governor's Office Staff present:

*Grace Reynolds, Program Administration Specialist, Office of New Americans and Board Administrator, ONAAB
Mona Siddiqui, Senior Policy Advisor, Office of New Americans*

Additional Guests:

*Susan Whyte, Assistant Attorney General and ONAAB Counsel, Virginia Office of the Attorney General
Dr. Janice Underwood,
Omer Yousuf, Fellow to Dr. Underwood
Sun Rockwell, Data Specialist working with Dr. Underwood*

Welcome and Call to Order

1:00pm Eric Lin Lin

Opened at 1:00pm

Eric Lin: We have quorum

Electronic Participant Policy

1:02pm Eric Lin

Does anyone have question about the electronic participation policy?

Michael Hoefer: What is the definition of a meeting?

Susan Wythe: A meeting is anything where we conduct business, and this applies to all meetings whenever more than 2 people work together on board business.

Juan Santacoloma: What is the definition of a personal matter?

Eric Lin: There is no hard and fast definition. There are no specifics, it is up to the board. For people who want to join the meeting electronically they send a message to the EC, then the board decides if their reason fits the categories of illness or personal issue.

Susan Wythe- If you are using a personal reason, you need to let Eric Lin know 24 hours before the meeting, but for an illness, you can notify Eric Lin at the last minute.

Eric Lin: Any changes?

Eva Stitt: Requests that we add that people need to give a 24 advanced notice if a member must miss a meeting due to personal issues.

Eric Lin: I will amend the motion to accept the policy with this change.

Eric Lin: I motion to adopt the electronic participation policy, with the addition of adding that members need to provide a 24-hour notice if he/she has a personal issue and must miss a meeting.

- **Hassan Ahmad Ahmed moved this motion.**
- **Juan Santacoloma seconded the motion.**
- **Board members unanimously voted to adopt the electronic participation policy.**

Eric Lin: We have 2 people who have requested to participate electronically.

Mel Borja: Rammy Babari- He is not comfortable participating because he is not fully vaccinated.

Eric Lin: I move to allow Rammy Barbari to participate electronically in today's meeting.

- **Michael Hoefer moved**
- **Hassan Ahmad seconded**
- **Board members unanimously voted to allow Rammy Barbari to participate electronically in today's meeting.**

Grace + Mona Called Rammy into the meeting.

Kate Ayers: Dora Mohammad requested that she participate electronically due to migraine headaches related to a concussion.

Eric Lin: I move to allow Dora Mohammad to participate electronically into today's meeting.

- **Juan Santacoloma motion**
- **Eva Stitt seconds**
- **Board members unanimously voted to allow Dora Mohammad to participate electronically in today's meeting.**

Grace and Mona called Dora, but she does not answer.

April 7, 2021, Meeting Minutes Approval

1:07pm Kate Ayers

Kate Ayers: Any changes the meeting minutes? The following changes were identified:

- Hasan Ahmad- need to change from Ahmed to Ahmad throughout
- Susannah Lepley is also spelled wrong on one page

Kate Ayers: I move to approve the minutes from the April 7, 2021, meeting with listed spelling changes

- **Juan Santacoloma motion**
- **Eva Stitt seconds**
- **Board members unanimously voted to allow to approve minutes from the April 7, 2021 meeting with listed spelling changes.**

Public Comment

1:10pm Grace Reynolds

Eric Lin: Any public comment?

Grace Reynolds: We have no one present who wants to make a public comment.

Eric Lin: We will move forward with no public comment.

Chair Report

1:20pm Eric Lin

- Slides that summarize the chair report can be found [here](#).
- Executive Committee met 3 times to work on the infrastructure – 4/15, 5/12, 6/9
- Eric had biweekly conversations with Mel to establish communication and roles, Kate to set up protocols for file structures and internal communications (emails will generally go out on Mondays), and Djibril to discuss setting up the processes for procurement for when we are able to receive and/or spend money.
- Mel Borja: Eric, can you define procurement for the board?
- Eric Lin: Procurement is the need to go through the proper processes for getting the things that we need.
- Susannah Lepley: It is anything that requires payment or reimbursement. If you volunteer to do something, there is no requirement to go through procurement.

- Eric and Mel had meetings with Senator Hashmi and Delegate Tran- The purpose was to thank them for their legislation and hear about their hopes about what the ONAAB could accomplish. They discussed issues and limitations of our work based on code- they want to come to meeting in the future but offered an open door for the board to ask questions and reach out when needed.
- Eric Lin: I submitted the 2020 Executive Summary to the system to meet our requirements. It was very basic, and the next report will cover more information such as election of officers.
- Executive Committee did 1:1 calls with members and created the google form assessment to help us with assignments on committees. This helped us understand what skill sets and interests members brought to the board.
- We wanted to thank the governor and staff for working to coordinate Immigrant Heritage Month. We were able to have launch our first event as a board. It was a panel which featured Mona, Seyoum, Dora, Juan, Hassan, and Eric.
- Amar Bhattarai resigned 6/1/21. We do not know his reason but wish him the best. We do have an open position. We have a list of applicants from before, but we can offer a recommendation to Shawn Soares, Deputy of Governor's appointments. If anyone knows someone who would be a good fit, please contact Eric Lin.

Administration Update

1:30pm Mona Siddiqui, Deputy Director- Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

- [Mona's presentation can be found here.](#)
- Mona provided an overview of the strategic planning process. This process is a collaboration between the office of DEI, DSS, and ONA. The goal of the plan is to carve out a road map for improving policies to help with integration of newcomers.
- Omer Yousuf joined Mona for the presentation- He is a Fellow for DEI and helped develop this presentation.
- There are 4 goal areas: interagency relations, external engagement, internal infrastructure, and relationship with ONAAB. These goals align with the code.
- Here are some details about each goal area:
 - *Interagency relations and culture*- The goal will be to raise visibility of the ONA and prioritize immigration integration initiatives with state government. We hope that we will develop state leaders so that they are ambassadors for immigrant integration. We hope to expand this DEI lens through all state government. Here is an outcome that shows why this strategy is important: The Governor wrote a letter to Biden urging him to include essential workers in the economic plan. A language access audit is being done- This workgroup is looking at language access across state agencies and will make recommendations for expanding language access.
 - *Raise the visibility with external partners*- The goal is to expand the relationships we build at the state level to local levels. We hope to assist localities in forming relationships with immigrant serving organizations. One example of this is to expand the scope of the current Virginia Community Capacity Initiative (VCCI);

this group was once for refugee resettlement agencies only but is being expanded to include other groups as well.

- *Develop institutional infrastructure*- This is looking at the internal structure of the ONA. We have outlined 4 key components in this area- (1) research + data (2) funding strategy (3) ONA has done a needs assessment and barriers analysis (4) support the developing rapport and positive relationship with the Office of New Americans Advisory Board.
- Eva Stitt: You mentioned helping refugee and immigrant communities, but I didn't hear language access- Is there any intent on developing language access?
- Mona Siddiqui: The 2021 budget language requires DEI to develop recommendations on language access for state government. We are currently working on those recommendations, and we hope that the recommendations will be shared beyond the state to the local level as well.
- Eva Stitt: what is the target timing for these to materialize?
- Mona Siddiqui: We have a hard deadline- November 1st- the report will be published
- Susannah Lepley: Could the board have a copy of the strategic plan?
- Mona: I will share a copy of this presentation along with the code language. The plan itself is not in draft form, but it will be shared when it is ready.

Office of New Americans Update

1:52pm Grace Reynolds

- Link to Grace's presentation is found [here](#).
- Grace showed the organizational chart. The key ideas from the organizational chart are (1) Grace and Liliana are the only 2 staff assigned to the immigrant services side of ONA. There are three program consultants on the refugee services side. (2) Seyoum must divide his time between immigrant and refugee side, but the ORR (Office of Refugee Resettlement) budget does not allow money to be used for immigrant services side for now. (3) Initial budget for ONA was only 350,000; We have several decades of refugee services support (4) Right now, integration of refugee and immigrant services is difficult because of budget and funding constraints (5) On the refugee side, agencies are preparing for an increased number of SIV, refugees, and unaccompanied minors.
- Specific ONA projects include:
 - Grace and Liliana have been doing outreach to get to know the network of organizations that serve immigrants and refugees. Their goal is to create a directory of organizations.
 - ONA will have VISTA members to help build capacity.
 - ONA has been accepted as 1 of 8 communities to be part of a WES skill immigrant integration program. This pilot project is for childcare. The goals of the pilot are to provide linguistically accessible training materials for people who want to provide childcare from their home. This would also create childcare

options for people who need childcare so they can go to work. A workgroup of stakeholders will be formed as part of this project.

- State innovation fund- asked to build capacity and language access for 211 service- waiting for full proposal – this would create outreach and training to select immigrant serving agencies to be call centers for 211.
- A needs assessment is underway with the VCU School of Public Policy (Dr. Liebert and Rissler) The assessment will answer the following: (1) what are unmet needs/barriers to integration that are experienced by the VA immigrant? (2) What is the extent of these barriers? (3) What federal/state/local government services are available but not accessible or used by immigrant communities? (4) What changes will improve access to services that are available but not used?
Phase 1- Qualitative data collection- interviews with 30-40 orgs providing services to immigrants (social workers, local govt, free clinics); GIS mapping of immigrants and immigrant service providers- This will use census and identify areas not well-covered by providers. This phase is due by November 15, 2021.
Phase 2- focus discuss groups with immigrants. Analyze and merge results from all data collection methods. This phase is due by June 15, 2021.
- Update from Covid vaccine clinics: Liliana has done at least 25 clinics, vaccinated more than 825 immigrants, mostly Spanish speakers, and utilized grassroots efforts to get this accomplished.

- Challenges of ONA: (1) Budget of 350,000 (2) Not enough to staff all of VA (3) Need more funding to support immigrant agencies in providing direct services (4) Lack of integration between the refugee and immigrant sides.

Mel Borja: Do you have initial ideas for how to address these challenges- What can we do to help?

Grace Reynolds: She would love to check in with Seyoum for specifics – right now we are building the basics.

Kate Ayers: I want to highlight the barriers that exist because the refugee and immigrant sides are not integrated. I want to urge the ONA staff to reach out to local agencies because community mapping has been done already.

Fern Hauck: How do we define immigrant-serving organization?

Eric Lin- That is a very good question. We must consider those that are organized and formal and those who are the pastor at the church, or informal network community.

Kate Ayers: We need to also identify the immigrant organizations that have organized themselves.

Hassan Ahmad: I have a suggestion- I hear a lot of talk the divide between refugee and immigrant- perhaps we should use the term *New American* the more of us that we use that term, the becomes part of our framework.

Eric Lin: I want to recognize, however, that there are certain divisions that must be recognized when you are talking about people with different immigrant statuses.

Hassan Ahmad: How about the term *Aspiring New American*?

Virginia Equity Dashboard

2:22pm Dr. Janice Underwood, Director- Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Dr. Underwood presented the equity dashboards, which can be found [here](#). Legislation joint resolution 537 declared racism is a public health crisis and 2.2435.12 requires that the Chief Diversity and Inclusion officer to conduct an equity assessment. We need to have data to help us make changes, and the equity dashboard is the beginning of this data collection.

Sun Rockwell, data expert shared information from the [equity dashboard](#)

- Equity in action- This part of the dashboard shows where COVID money has gone according to the social determinants of health.
- Equity at a glance- This provides specific statistics across the state of Virginia on the social determinants of health and compares how Virginia fare compared to other states.
- The equity dashboard is a living document that will be constantly updated. Some data that is coming soon includes: use of EBT + Childcare. The goal is to include statistics on workforce diversity. You can narrow the data down in some cases to race and ethnicity, but there is not data specific to immigrant status.
- Eva Stitt: Will there be data on mental health?
- Dr. Underwood: Mental health services will be a focus on the rescue plan, and if so, this may mean that this area can be explored in the future.

Break

3-3:15

Office of New Americans Advisory Board Vision

3:15pm Hannah Borja, Vice Chair

Mel led the group through the visioning exercise, which can be viewed [here](#). She shared the word cloud that was created based on the survey, and asked the group what words were missing.

Fern Hauck: opportunity

Hassan Ahmad: empower

Ahoo Salem: equity

Mel shared drafts of the vision statement, and the following suggestions were made:

Eva Stitt: These options are written more like a mission rather than vision. A vision is what will things look like when we complete the mission.

Hassan Ahmad: I see integration as an active process- maybe we use stronger language than support such as: fight, encourage, push, built.

Juan Santacoloma- The vision depends on what we are looking for. We are looking for diversity, equity, an inclusion- We need to integrate all the newcomers living in the commonwealth to the whole community at all the levels.

Eric Lin- For me, it comes back to a welcoming commonwealth- how does that happen, and what does it look like?

Djibril Niang: Welcoming commonwealth where new Americans will find opportunities and tools for their total integration.

Hassan Ahmad: The idea of welcoming is common in many cultures, and I would like to see an element of respect.

Dr Eva Stitt: Add thrive to the list.

Juan Santacoloma: Welcome and honors- Can we combine welcome and respect?

Mona Siddiqui: Respect, honor, and value and belonging

Amelia: ONAAB envisions a welcoming Commonwealth where all New Americans are respected, valued and supported in order to thrive in their communities.

Ahoo Salem: New Americans need to be active agents it goes both ways.

Eva Stitt: she wants #1 to be written in the active form.

Mel Borja will put together a draft of these ideas and we will revisit this or share it electronically- we can vote on it and adopt it from there.

Mel Borja: What does the term New American mean?

Milton Vickerman: Academics understand it to be immigrants who come after 1965 and their children. The actual immigrants themselves coming to new destinations and their children- 2nd, 3rd, 4th generations.

Juan Santacoloma- Americans think about people who are seeking to naturalized.

Michael Hoefer: I want to reiterate Milton- first generation- impact the household- children of immigrants should be considered because it impacts the whole household.

Eric Lin- We must look at what makes sense and look at the data that is available. This board can develop their own definition on who this- there is no consensus out there. We are going to push the commonwealth to collect the data, so we may need to come to a specific definition.

Kate Ayers: What about policy? Will we need to define it in a specific way when we design policies that are tied to public dollars?

Paul Berry: I recommend being flexible with the definition; focus on the problem, not the semantics. The policies are easier to digest if you use more flexible language. (Internal vs. external definitions)

Eric Lin: If you are interested in discussing the data and thinking about a definition, contact Eric.

Office of New Americans Advisory Board Structure

4:04 pm Eric Lin

Eric shared proposed committee structure documents, which can be seen [here](#).

Here was the feedback + discussion on the proposed structure:

Eva Stitt: I still want to have a separate committee for language access. If we do not have it as a committee, it may become buried.

Eric Lin: I am hoping that by having a focus on language access across committees, it will be elevated even more.

Fern Hauck: Could you clarify further the guiding principles- how would the 2 people work across communities and communicate?

Eric Lin: If a member of the committee finds out about a specific language barrier issue, they share it with the language access leads.

Mel Borja: I like the flexibility of this structure. This structure also prevents committees from working in silos.

Paul Berry: In our bylaws we are allowed the opportunity to develop ad hoc committees as needed.

Susannah Lepley: I like the idea of trying it out and knowing it can be flexible.

Eric Lin: I move to approve the proposed committee structure document.

- **Susannah Lepley motions**
- **Mel Borja seconds**
- **Board member unanimously voted to approve the proposed committee structure.**

Eva Stitt agreed to be the lead on language access and Michael Hoefer will take the lead on data.

Eric: If anyone is not happy about what committee you are assigned to, please let me know. I will float among the three committees.

Questions:

Fern- Can you be on more than one committee?

Eric: Yes but be mindful of your time.

Michael Hoefer: What are the expectations moving forward now that they are established?

Eric Lin: We do have to meet in person, but work can also be done via email and 1:1 conversation. Other boards have subcommittee meetings the same day as the main meeting. We will provide more information about this moving forward.

Break for picture

Office of New Americans Advisory Board Annual report 2021

4:05 Eric Lin

Eric shared information about the annual report. This information can be found in a presentation [here](#).

Here are some highlights:

- The report is due Dec 1, 2021, but we need to submit report earlier. Eric recommends that we submit it by early October, so legislators have time to take any actions.
- Committees would have to meet by August, and we would vote on the final version to submit at our October meeting.
- This year, Eric suggests that we make some recommendations around infrastructure and basic things.
- Mel Borja: If here is something that we need to prioritize to have signed into law in July 2022, then we can try to get it in there.
- Eric Lin: Our board is different because ours goes to the governor, and it also goes to the general assembly.
- Susannah Lepley: Should we look at what others are doing and recommend what other boards are doing? This could amplify what others have done.
- Eric Lin: I will pull the most recent reports and ask others to share their recommendations.
- Executive Committee is responsible for putting together the report.

Miscellaneous Board Business

4:45 pm, Kate Ayers

- Please follow the Email/google drive protocols as listed on the handout. Let Kate know if you have any questions.
- Please refer to the handout located [here](#).

Closing Remarks

4:55pm, Eric Lin

- Next meeting is October 6th.
- At the next meeting, we can talk about locations for future meetings- If we want to keep them in Richmond or spread them across the state.
- If we do get to 6 meetings, we may want to have 3 meetings around the state.
- Some advisory boards host town halls in conjunction with board meetings.

Sussanah Lepley: Thank you to the EC for the time that folks put in.

Eric Lin- last thoughts?

No additional thoughts shared.

Eric Lin: I move to adjourn the meeting at 5:05PM

Mel Borja: I motion

Djibril Niang: I second

Board members unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 5:05PM.